



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SENATORS SERINO AND BORRELLO CALL ON AGING CHAIR RACHEL MAY TO SUBPOENA DR. HOWARD ZUCKER ON UNDERCOUNT OF 12,000 ADDITIONAL COVID DEATHS

SUSAN SERINO August 31, 2021

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; NURSING HOMES**

ALBANY – In an effort to provide full transparency around the 12,000 additional COVID deaths the public has learned the Cuomo administration concealed from official figures, Senators Sue Serino and George Borrello called on Aging Committee Chair Rachel May to use her subpoena power to compel Commissioner Howard Zucker to testify under oath about how the undercount transpired, who was involved and other key decisions pertaining to the state's pandemic response.

The updated count was released by Governor Kathy Hochul shortly after taking office last week. The additional deaths increased New York's total number of people lost to COVID to approximately 55,400 people, putting the state figure in line with data submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Transparency is one thing, but accountability is another altogether,” said Senator Sue Serino, Ranking Member of the Aging Committee. “New Yorkers deserve honest answers

about how decisions were made that impacted real human lives during the pandemic, and those with the power to get those answers have a duty to use it immediately. In order to rebuild public trust, it is important that anyone who had a hand in manipulating and withholding data from the public no longer has a place in state government, and that the state undergoes a full, independent review of our pandemic response—especially as it relates to the state’s nursing homes. That starts with issuing subpoenas today.”

“Even with our new Governor promising to remove those involved in the corruption and scandals surrounding the Cuomo administration, one key figure is still in place and making decisions that affect the lives of New Yorkers: Dr. Howard Zucker,” said Senator George Borrello, Member of the Senate Aging Committee. “The revelation that 12,000 deaths were left out of the official count is just the first step in bringing full transparency and accountability to this issue. It must be followed up by an investigation into the circumstances as well as into the actions of Commissioner Zucker. New Yorkers deserve answers.”

During the 2021 Legislative Session, Senators Serino and Borrello advanced three motions to subpoena Commissioner Zucker and the Department of Health to obtain information on the coverup of nursing home data and the state’s mismanaged response as it relates to nursing homes and residential healthcare facilities. All three motions were denied.

As the letter by Serino and Borrello states: “As Chairwoman of the committee, you denied these motions on that day [February 9], and additionally on March 16 and May 11, even stating in one denial that you didn’t ‘see the point’ in issuing subpoenas. The events that have unfolded since that time, including the subsequent resignation of the scandal-scarred former Governor, make it clear that there were, in fact, many reasons to issue these subpoenas.”

“The Cuomo administration’s public COVID response was a carefully choreographed drama, positioned at all times to make Andrew Cuomo look like a hero,” said Senator Borrello. “We know now that facts and figures that didn’t fit that narrative were manipulated to maintain the image. We cannot fully move on from this dark chapter until we know the truth. To that end, we urge Senator May to do the right thing on behalf of the families of all 55,400 people lost to this virus and on behalf of all New Yorkers, and subpoena Commissioner Zucker.”

###